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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/727,243	12/04/2003	Anthony Santangelo		4884

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EXAMINER

BOEHLER, ANNE MARIE M

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3611

DATE MAILED: 04/02/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/727,243

Applicant(s)

SANTANGELO, ANTHONY

Examiner

Anne Marie M Boehler

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 1-4 are objected to because of the following informalities: in claims 1, line 3, applicant recites a cover "which will cover and protect trailer hitches". However, the cover protects a hitch receiver, not a hitch (a ball hitch, for example). Appropriate correction is required.

2. The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a). The drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Therefore, the bumper fascia in combination with the cover, as recited in claim 3, must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s). No new matter should be entered.

A proposed drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

3. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(a) the invention was known or used by others in this country, or patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country, before the invention thereof by the applicant for a patent.

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

4. Claims 1, 2, and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Parker.

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Parker shows a cover that includes a square post that fits snugly into a hitch receiver to fix the cover to a vehicle. The cover is generally rectangular, with lower edges that curve inwardly.

5. Claims 1, 2, and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Young.

Young shows a cover that includes a square post that slots snugly into a hitch receiver to fix the cover to a vehicle. The cover is generally rectangular, with a lower edge that curves inwardly.

6. Claims 1 and 2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Turner.

Turner shows a hitch cover 30 that includes a square post 12 that fits snugly into a hitch receiver 16 to fix the cover to a vehicle.

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1-4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fulkerson in view of Dahl.

Fulkerson shows a cover 42 for a hitch receiver 20. The cover is generally rectangular with an inwardly curved lower edge and it completes and closes an opening in bumper fascia 30. In col. 3, lines 20-22, Fulkerson teaches that the cover 42 can be pivoted or removed to reveal the hitch receiver for use.

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Fulkerson fails to teach providing a means for attaching the cover directly to the hitch receiver tube.

Dahl teaches providing a cover 13 for a hitch receiver tube in order to cover the tube for esthetic purposes and to protect the tube from dirt and damage. The cover is attached to the tube by a square post 18 that may fit snugly into the tube (see Figure 8).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to provide the Fulkerson cover with a means for attaching the cover directly to the hitch receiver tube, as taught by Dahl, in order to provide a stronger support for the cover.

9. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.


Roberts, Casson, Powell, McClellan, McPheters, Deerman and Oswood show hitch receiver tube covers.

10. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Anne Marie M Boehler whose telephone number is 703-308-0422. The examiner can normally be reached on 7:30-5:00, Monday-Thursday, and alternate Fridays.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Lesley Morris can be reached on 703-308-0629. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

 3/30/04
Anne Marie M Boehler
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3611

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